



Rachel Whiteread, *Untitled (Crease)*, 2021–22
 Courtesy the artist and Gagosian
 Photo Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd

is not just an emotional reaction of fright to something strange or unusual presented to the subject. Studying the etymological derivation of the term *heimlich*, “familiar,” Freud discovers a number of semantic nuances that bring it closer to its opposite, *unheimlich*. Indeed, if on the one side the term indicates the intimate and the familiar, on the other it refers to what is kept concealed, secret, but which may suddenly reappear. The Uncanny, for Freud, is, then, what was to be kept separate from the “familiar,” removed from consciousness, but which in reality, out of the blue, bobs back up to the surface. The Uncanny becomes anguish specifically because it breaks through into the familiar, into the known, everyday object, which reflects and reassures our identity.

This same dialectic informs Whiteread’s entire oeuvre: her research starts from mundane things, such as the series of small sheds taken from the English countryside, and then transmits its negative, the sense of nostalgia, of forgotten memory. Alongside her *Chicken Sheds*, her work features constructions that can be described as deeply *heimlich*, familiar, such as country barns and houses from remote rural areas, which are presented, though, as casts of the void left by their disappearance. They thus become *unheimlich*. Moreover, Whiteread uses